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ABSTRACT

In 1996, a major overhaul in the delivery of professional development for administrators was undertaken in the urban school district under study. A Principal Leadership Institute was created and the 182 principals and vice-principals of the district were randomly assigned to 8 cohorts, each of which was affiliated with 1 of the 8 universities and colleges with a contract with the district for professional development services. The expressed needs of the administrators participating, the effectiveness of the school-university collaboration, and insights for future professional development were studied. Administrators were interviewed 3 times over 2 years, with response rates of 55 to 65%. The study finds that urban administrators have a wide variety of needs that they seek to have met through professional development opportunities. Educational administration programs at the college level cannot prepare administrators adequately for their complex roles, so that the need for continuous professional development becomes paramount. The lack of a coherent focus in this principal development institute created problems that were compounded by the competing notions of leadership advanced by the eight universities. Administrators found it difficult to translate the information they received into practice. (Contains 5 tables and 24 references.) (SLD)

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Professional Development and Urban Leadership: A Study of Urban Administrators' Perceptions of What Matters most in their Professional Development.

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Professional Development and Urban Leadership: A Study of Urban Administrators' Perceptions of what matters most in their Professional Development

The transformation of urban school systems is inextricably linked to the national reform efforts in curriculum, assessment and accountability. These broader reform efforts influenced by federal and state policy directives have placed a tremendous burden on urban systems to effectuate the kind of systemic change that will result in students meeting tougher standards. A corollary to this improvement is a redefinition and enlargement of the role of teachers, parents and central office managers as change agents. Therefore, as these systems move toward transformation, the need for sound and viable models of professional development has become increasingly apparent. The pivotal role being played by professional development in the systemic reform of urban districts is underscored by a recent survey undertaken by the Council of Great City Schools. The results revealed that in most of the nation's largest urban systems professional development is viewed as one of the most effective reform strategies, yet paradoxically remains as the area of greatest challenge (Council of Great City School, 1998).

Particularly troubling for these systems is designing models of professional development for those who lead their schools. The extant literature on urban transformation resonates with the need for strong and effective leadership. However, although there is some agreement on the desired attributes of the new leadership structure, there is a lacuna in the knowledge on how to develop these attributes in existing incumbents. Persistent shortcomings are evident in the research on this issue, for while on the one hand description of effective leadership practices abounds, few studies on the other have attempted to describe how such practices can be developed (Begley, 1995; Neufeld, 1997; Mann, 199). It is quite evident given the state of current knowledge that more research in this area is needed, particularly as it bears upon the principalship

in urban systems, since this group as a whole confronts an environment constantly in flux, and with increasing role demands.

This paper addresses the issue of the development of incumbent urban principals and vice-principals by raising and answering three questions. First, what are the expressed development needs articulated by urban school-based administrators? Second, how effective is a school- university collaboration in meeting these needs. Third, how may the results from the study be conjoin with previous research findings to assist in forwarding our understanding of effective professional development practices for urban administrators.

Competing theories of leadership have evolved over the years with significant implications for shaping the content and process of professional development (Duke, 1998). This study provides a unique opportunity for us to explore the relative efficacy of models grounded on different theoretical premises. The eight universities which were engaged in partnership with the district placed varying emphasis on different theoretical assumptions and the professional development model which each used was guided by these assumptions. Administrators evaluation of their experiences with each university provide us with critical insight into the perceived relevancy of each model to their needs.

OVERVIEW OF THE FIELD

The development of leaders who have the vision and capacity to lead the renewal of urban schools has emerged as a major priority, and much has been written on the leadership imperatives that will be needed. While there is no singular model of the new leadership structure, several crosscutting themes and perspectives can be detected. Undergirding many of the recent writings is the notion that the bureaucratic/technocratic approach with the emphasis on the means rather than the end, and on efficiency and technical problem solving rather than on the final product lacks the ability to result in meaningful organizational change. This lack of fit between the old models of

leadership and the conceptualization organizational change as it is envisioned today is partially attributed to the assumptions on which the need for change is predicated. These assumptions hold views on the process of schooling in general, and knowledge and assessment in particular, which are inherently different from the assumptions informing the technocratic/bureaucratic model.

Several authors have suggested that as authority devolves at the level of the school, institutional transformation rest on the development of leaders who exhibit skills associated with moral, cultural, visionary and institutional competencies. The reframing of leadership qualities along these dimensions creates a view of leadership that is less restrictive than the traditionally held one, and by implication more comprehensive in nature, where leadership is seen as an art rather than the simple acquisition of discrete administrative and managerial skills. Implicit to this broader conceptualization of leading are the notions of humanity and values (Greenfield, 1986; Hodgkinson, 1991), the creation of democratic school communities (Apple, 1993;Giroux, 1992), and the development of school-based communicative discourses in which multiple participants have a voice within schools (Apple & Beane, 1995).

Pronounced attention is also being paid to the role of the principal as an instructional leader, with several emergent issues with respect to preparation and development. From a definitional standpoint, Begley(1995) provides the most succinct description of what instructional leadership entails. He describes it as the 'clear articulation of educational philosophy, extensive knowledge about effective educational practices and a clear understanding of the policy environment framing the purposes of schooling and practices' (p.407). The concept of the instructional leader is premised on the purported causal link between actions of principals, classroom practices and improved student outcomes (Heck, Larsen and Mar 1990). The argument has been posited that the absence of context for leadership, brought about by the focus on organizational and managerial courses in education administration can be overcome by placing leadership within the context of

instructional delivery. Thus the question 'leadership of what', is answered by advancing the notion of leadership of the teaching-learning process (Sacher,1994).

Contextual factors in the urban setting have the potential to constrain the applicability of many of these viewpoints, especially in their ideal formulations. Bogotch, Miron and Murray (1998) in a study on moral leadership discourses in urban settings found that the contradiction within their contexts resulted in moral practices either not clearly emerging or frequently actualized (p. 324). Similarly, the complexities of urban school systems have been found to mitigate against the frequent contacts necessary to promote leadership within the context of instructional delivery.

Irrespective of the problems which imbue urban schools, it is clear that changes in school leadership has to occur given the demands that are being imposed by the dynamics of a changing society (Maxcy, 1991, Rost, 1993). At the same time adequate support for principals in the form of professional development is needed, if role anxiety, dissonance and burnout are to be avoided. The potential of such occurrences in the absence of support is underscored by Whitaker's (1995) findings which revealed that excessive negative feelings were exhibited by principals who experienced increasing demands, role confusion and decreasing autonomy.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT APPROACHES

There is general acceptance of the notion that the professional development of school-based leaders should be a seamless one extending from pre-service preparation to induction and the full Length of their careers. Less uniformly agreed on is what the content and process of the development ought to be. Various alternatives have been proffered. For example, Erlandson (1994) suggests that principal formation should be approached from a 'stage perspective' in which academic preparation, field-based learning and professional formation are linked to various career phases and events. Erlandson model is congruent with models that espouse different professional

growth experiences on the basis of length of tenure. Problem- based learning is advocated by (Murphy & Hallinger, 1992) as a viable alternative method of structuring the process and content of leadership development. This model integrates the content of a principal's role with the management processes that lead to the development of the role. Cognitive apprenticeship is yet another approach that has been used in leadership development (Prestine & LeGrand, 1991). The central element of cognitive apprenticeship is making external the metacognitive processes that inform expert leaders administrative actions and decisions. Begley (1995) has built on this model by proposing the use of leadership profiles in both formal and less formal situations. Mentoring (Daresh & Playo,1992), contract coaching (Schon,1983), and principal forums (Duigan & McPherson, 1992) are all viable delivery models which have been advocated.

Different factors have been found to be associated with successful principal development programs. Bezzina (1994) identifies six characteristics of successful programs; (i) these programs are founded upon praxis and reflection; (ii) they occur largely in the context of schools; (iii) they require appropriate motivation; (iv) they require a collaborative learning culture; (v) they require appropriate resources and (vi) they are not always amenable to credentialling. In contrast, programs that tend not to be successful are those which provide single day in-service outside the context of school, provide no follow-up support and no opportunities for administrators to apply newly acquired knowledge. Programs therefore that lack a coherent focus, that are detached from the everyday realities of an administrator's life and that are episodic in nature are likely not to have a cumulative impact on changing practices.

University-Public School Collaboration

It is widely accepted that sustained change in public schools involves the collaboration of several different institutions to include state and federal support as well as institutions of higher learning. The role of the latter has become the focus of much research particularly in the area of teacher preparation and development. Several pertinent findings related to the factors that promote or impede successful university/public school collaborations have been published. And while these have been conducted primarily around teacher development the findings are broad enough in their implications to be equally applicable to leadership development.

Cultural, economic and political barriers as well as structural and technical problems have been found to continually plagued collaborative arrangements between these two sectors. Million and Vare (1994) note that differences in the workplace cultures of both types of institutions contribute to the formation of different professional values and behaviors that may be at variance with each other. Further, interactants unexpressed erroneous assumption of a reciprocity in perspective frequently result in a breakdown of collaborative (Maloy, 1985). Thus as Metzner (1970), found schools and universities frequently have diametrically opposing viewpoints on collaborative projects. Schools tend to be driven by ongoing practical realities, while not necessarily in conflict, are different from the research and academic ideals to which universities are oriented (Smith, 1994; Tatel and Guthrie, 1983). In some instances the school culture is noted to possess an anti-scholastic culture which brings it into conflict with its cooperative partner (Smith, 1994). Political issues related to governance and resource control have also rendered collaborative ventures susceptible to difficulties (See Krueger, 1987 annotated bibliography). Wu (1986) argues that such conflict can be attenuated if collaborations are built around the principles of (1) mutual needs and benefits; (2) clear role expectations, (3) acceptable conditions under which both institutions

must work; (4) a functional communication network; (5) administrative structure and support; (6) trust and (7) a medium suited to the task.

RESEARCH DESIGN

The Context

In 1996 a major overhaul in the delivery of professional development for administrators was undertaken in the district under study. Funded by three major foundations, a Principal Leadership Institute was created, and all vice-principals and principals (182) in the district were randomly assigned to eight cohorts. Each cohort was affiliated with one of the eight universities/colleges contracted by the district to be responsible for delivering a series of professional development activities. Advisory teams comprised of two graduate students and a faculty member supported the cohorts and their university partners. The advisory teams (and the term 'advisory' may be misleading) were viewed as functioning as coaches and learning partners, engaging in follow-up activities at the school site.

A core curriculum for the Institute was developed. However, the topics were very general and lent themselves to each university's interpretation. Typical topics were for example, 'what should schools be about', or 'what kind of leaders do we need for our schools'. These topics were explored in individual cohort meetings, however there were quarterly retreats when all the cohorts came together. A connecting theme between the individual cohort activities and the large group retreats was instructional leadership. A strand was also built into the curriculum that allowed the universities to tailor their activities when desired to the ongoing needs of the administrators.

During the second year of the Institute's operation, responding to the concerns of administrators, Central Office staff, as well as the results from the first wave of interviews the cohorts were reassigned on the basis of administrative reporting. In the district, five assistant

superintendents administratively supervise approximately eighty schools. These administrative assignments overlap with the geographical divisions in the city. During the first year, because cohort assignments were random, administrators were in cohorts with fellow members from different sections of the city, and administrators from the same building could presumably be members of different cohorts. This created some problems, and it was considered advisable to redesign the structure of the cohorts along the lines mentioned previously.

Cohort assignment however, was not the only problem, which surfaced. Tensions existed between the university partners as well as between some universities and the Institute's director. Much of this tension centered on deep philosophical differences between the universities and the district. This was exacerbated by the failure of the district to provide clear accountability guidelines for the universities. Thus, issues related to what constituted success were cast in very general terms with no concrete or empirically verifiable indicators. The findings reported in this study represented the first attempt to empirically answer questions related to impact and effectiveness.

Methods

The methodological stanch taken in the study was primarily inductive. With no a priori assumptions, administrators and universities were given the chance to express their opinions on several issues related to the professional growth experiences in the Institute. Because the philosophical underpinnings of each university's approach were quite distinct, it was felt that administrators' degree of satisfaction had to be lodged within the unique context of their experiences in their respective cohort.

The study used a 'panel' design in which administrators were interviewed three times over two academic years. This approach was considered to be desirable for two reasons. First, there was an interest in determining how stable administrators' perceptions and attitudes were with respect to

their needs. Second, we wanted to study the impact of program changes (which could be considered as stimuli) in producing changes in the level of satisfaction with various aspects of the Institute. It was felt that repeated interviews were the only way in which these questions could be answered satisfactorily. The first wave of interviews occurred in May of 1997, the second in January of 1998 and the third in June of 1998. A common set of questions was repeated at all three times. The response rate from the first set of interview was 55%, from the second 65% and third, because of problem with one cohort. There were turnovers in the sample due to retirement and new hirees. Interviews with the universities occurred only once, in April of 1997, and perhaps should have occurred more than once given the changes in the program.

Instruments were developed for both administrators and universities. The survey administered to the principals and vice-principals included both scaled and non-scaled questions. The scaled questions focused on their level of satisfaction with various aspects of the Institute to include the relevancy of the activities to their role as an administrator, the usefulness of what was learnt, the ease of application, follow-up support from their university partner, knowledge-base and skills of the university partners and mentoring support. Non-scaled questions focused on the benefits derived, things to do differently, areas of professional development that should be addressed in the future and what constitutes a successful professional development experience. By design, the survey contained no demographic questions for the following reason. Administrators in the district prior to the Institute's opening had just completed an extensive evaluation of their performance conducted by a group of external educators. Portfolios had to be submitted, school visitations by the outside evaluators were made and administrators were shadowed at least three times. On the basis of the outcome of the evaluation, administrators either kept their jobs, were demoted or terminated. Given this, we felt that administrators' candor would only be forthcoming if they felt that the instrument was completely confidential.

The "College- Partner Survey" was an extensive instrument consisting of about forty open-ended questions. Given the comprehensiveness and complexity of the program there was no other way to get at the multiplicity of views without raising all these questions. The questions covered a range of issues to include the philosophical assumptions undergirding the models of professional development, desired leadership changes, perceived congruency between the universities, types of professional development activities engaged in, and level of satisfaction with certain operational features of the Institute. A preliminary review of the instrument before its formal administration was conducted with the eight universities.

Data Analysis

The data from the 'College Partner Survey' was analyzed using the QSRNudist program. The orienting perspective, which we took with the data, was one of establishing commonalties and dissimilarities and to use this information to develop broad categories in which to place individual universities. The analyses reported in this paper are based on selected data from this instrument. Specifically the analysis is limited to presentation of findings related to philosophy, assumptions about what it takes to change leadership practices, definition of role, perceived congruency between each other, dimensions of leadership addressed by their respective programs and selected overviews of range and types of activities.

Ridit analysis was used to compare the data obtained from the three sets of surveys administered to principals and vice-principals. Because the samples were not truly matched (due to attrition and replacement) an analysis which allowed us to use the first set of data as a reference point for understanding changes in the subsequent sets was considered to be the most appropriate. From the first set of data we estimated for each scaled question, the proportion of all individuals with an attitude score falling at or below the midpoint of each scale value (scale values were 1-5 with 1 representing strongly disagree, and 5 strongly agree). Ridit values were then

calculated for each scale value for a given question. Based on the distribution of the responses from the subsequent interviews a mean ridit value was calculated for each question. If the mean ridit for a question on the subsequent interviews was greater than .50, we inferred that a randomly selected administrator from the subsequent surveys held a more unfavorable attitude, and conversely. This analysis also allowed us to chart the consistency in attitudes and feelings over the two academic years. This was accomplished by comparing the ridit values from the second and third surveys to the reference point. Z values based on the standard error of the ridits were calculated and tested for statistical significance.

Administrator's attitudes were also examined within the context of their cohort experiences. To facilitate this analysis, the universities were, based on the qualitative data described earlier, placed into one of five categories based on their primary orienting philosophy. For each category, the frequency of distributions for each scaled question was calculated and reported. The findings from the 'College Partner Survey' are presented first, followed by the data from the administrators' surveys. Responses from the open-ended questions are interwoven with the quantitative results.

FINDINGS

Competing philosophical orientations

Table 1 indicates that the philosophical premises underpinning the approaches adopted by the universities clustered around five general themes: moral and ethical leadership, instructional leadership, contingency theory, problem-based learning, and scientific management . Only one university appeared uninfluenced by any one theoretical slant, instead choosing to eclectically draw upon a variety of perspectives. Moral and ethical conception of leadership was the single most common paradigm, with three out of the eight universities stating this to be their primary frame of reference. Each of the other four perspectives was cited by only one university. With the

exception of the university using a model based on instructional supervision, there was no indication from the responses provided that attempts were made to reframe any of the theoretical assumptions or premises against the backdrop of the urban context. Indeed, in one instance, the university was quite emphatic in noting that its MA program in Educational Administration was the cornerstone of all its activities.

While the existence of concrete differences in philosophical assumptions might be considered on the one hand to have the potential to create a climate for the fertile discussion of ideas among the partners, this in fact did not happen. Instead these competing beliefs about school leadership resulted in tension among the universities, which mitigated against a successful collaboration among all eight as illustrated by the following quotes:

> .....was diametrically opposed to.... in that we are not a graduate course in educational administration. This was not our hope for what a cohort experience might become.

> ...there are competing sets of beliefs among universities. The more traditional school of thought emphasizes isolated technical skills and a scientific rationalist perspective. The more contemporary school of thought emphasizes the integration of competencies, the contextual nature of leadership and a constructivst view of knowledge. I believe the contemporary view is predominant among the cohorts, I do not believe it is universal. I wrote a paper in which I tried to articulate the constructvist point of view, in the hope that the discourse among us would lead to a greater consensus about our frame of reference.

Not surprisingly there were quite distinct differences in viewpoints on how to effectuate changes in leadership practices as is evident in the matrix in Table 2 which shows the association between primary theoretical focus and viewpoints on creating change. Engaging belief systems was associated with moral theories of leadership, so also were the elements of building trust and the view of the leader as a change agent. Both building trust and seeing administrators as change agents were also identified as central to the process of change by two other universities influenced by different sets of theoretical traditions. On the other hand, the university focusing on instructional leadership (which also had attempted to refine its assumptions based on the urban

context) saw legitimizing the beliefs and practices of the administrators as well as engaging them at their current level of competency as the salient means. Two universities were unable to articulate a clear set of assumptions on change.

Various dimensions of leadership traits and practices were tapped to be addressed by the universities. As noted previously the concept of instructional leadership was an agreed upon area of focus, at least in the formal retreats. However, keeping with their theoretical influences each university focussed on specific leadership issues to be dealt with in their individual cohort sessions. The three universities whose theoretical point of departure was the moral and ethical dimensions of leadership developed their professional development activities around these issues. Instructional leadership skills were identified by four of the universities as their primary area of focus with their cohorts, while attending to the development of sound administrative and managerial skills was chosen by one.

What role did the universities see themselves playing in this process of change? It is safe to say that for the most part they tended to see their roles as facilitators, functioning as support systems to the principals and vice-principals. However there were some that conceptualized their roles in distinctly different terms. For example, one university saw itself as providing 'intellectual leadership', another as the 'catalyst for change'. Such subtle nuances in the universities' perceptions of themselves as well as the assumptions which were embodied in their approaches significantly bore upon administrators evaluation of their experiences in the Institute as will be made clear by the next set of reported findings.

Perceptions on the effectiveness of their professional development experiences

Administrators were asked to evaluate several aspects of their professional development experiences, the results of which are presented in Tables 3 through 5. Table 3 presents the findings from the first set of survey responses, and provides a summary view of responses across all cohorts. The data is reported as 'percent agreeing' to each of the items. A number of interesting findings are evident. First, although administrators rated several areas of their experiences favorably only half felt that their effectiveness as leaders had improved as a consequence of involvement in the Institute. Second, administrators rated quite positively the support received from other administrators in their cohort and felt that the universities had much to offer. However, over half felt that the topics addressed were not relevant to their roles (56%). In spite of the question of relevancy, 67% felt that the knowledge obtained was practical, but only 49% felt that this could be easily implemented. Perhaps what appears to be a dichotomy in attitudes can best be summed up by two administrators' comments:

> cohort activities-while relevant-are out of sync with our current need

> I do want to emphasize that their presentation is very good. My criticism is that sometimes not practical or useful. When I leave my building to go to a meeting, I want to leave with something practical and useful that I can implement.

Perceived co-ordination between cohort activities and the demands and directives from their respective assistant superintendents was rated very poorly by the administrators. Only 7.3% felt that there was co-ordination between both sets of activities in contrast to 75% who felt otherwise. Both administrators as well as the universities were equally frustrated by the underlying political tensions between the assistant superintendents and the Institute as exemplified by the following statement expressed by one of the university on the subject of co-ordination:

> ..... there has been no co-ordination between the Assistant Superindents and or other central office departments with respect to professional development for vice- principals and principals. In fact, some assistant superintendents have publicly denigrated the Institute's college team, and some appear to be in personal competition with the Institute. This is a serious problem because the message received by the principals and vice-principals is not positive.

A second analytical focus of the data gathered from the first set of survey responses pertained to the relationship between administrators' attitudes and perceptions and cohort orientation as identified in the previous section on philosophical leanings. This relationship is tabularly presented in the form of mean scores (refer to Table 4). The data reveals that administrators belonging to the cohort whose focus was on instructional leadership were apt to rate their experiences more favorably than administrators in other cohorts. This is the only group of administrators who felt that there was congruency between cohort activities and their role as administrators; all other cohorts expressed a desire for more relevancy in topics addressed. Further, this group of administrators was less likely than other groups to desire a greater degree of coordination of their professional development, and were more satisfied with the quality of the mentoring support received. Not surprisingly, members in this cohort felt more strongly that their effectiveness as leaders had improved as a consequence of the Institute.

On the other hand, administrators belonging to the cohort influenced by the scientific management tradition were apt to, on the whole, be more conservative in their evaluation of their experiences. Similarly, administrators attached to the cohort whose activities were premised on moral formulations were less inclined to believe that the knowledge obtained was easy to implement, or that their leadership effectiveness had improved appreciably as a consequence of the Institute.

There was generally however, consistency among the other cohorts in their evaluations of their experiences in the Institute. For the most part the means reported in the Table indicate that the principals and vice-principals were very unsure in their evaluation of their experiences with the

exception of their perceptions of collegial support with fellow cohort members. On this issue all cohorts were unequivocal in their observations that cohort members were very supportive of each other. In fact, the opportunity to collaborate with and discuss ideas with their colleagues was cited by administrators as the single most important benefit derived from participation in the Institute.

Attitudinal Shifts

As intimated previously, largely as a consequence of dissatisfaction with the degree of coordination between the Institute and other professional development activities occurring in the district, particularly those falling under the aegis of the Assistant Executive Superintendent, and the fact that the random assignment of administrators to cohorts had resulted in members of the same administrative staff in a building being exposed to competing philosophies and approaches, it was decided to reorganize cohort memberships during the second year. The new configuration resulted in administrators from the same building being assigned to one cohort, and each university working directly with a cluster of schools being supervised by a given Assistant Superintendent.

Given these changes, at both the midpoint and end of the second year, administrators were resurveyed in order to determine if their level of satisfaction with their experiences in the Institute had improved or remained the same. The results from these surveys are presented in Table 5, in the form of ridit values. If a given ridit value is greater than .50, the assumption can be made that administrators feelings on an issue worsened, if less than .50 improved, and if .50 remained the same. Z values were calculated to determine the statistical significance of detected shifts. Overall, the ridit values for responses from the mid-year surveys conducted during the second year tended to be generally higher than the values obtained at the end of that year. The ridit

values for the mid-year surveys were with the exception of two areas greater than .50 which signify that administrators were generally dissatisfied with their professional development experiences as compared with the first year. Administrators comments suggest that having to establish new relationships not only with a different college partner but also with new cohort members was a strong contributing force influencing these feelings as reflected by the following comment:

> I took one year to develop rapport and trust with previous cohort. This year cohorts were rearranged. Time has to be given to reestablishing rapport and trust .

It is difficult to say if the degree of collegiality found to exist at the end of the first year was ever reestablished. In fact on the basis of the ridit values reported in the Table, by the end of the second year, feelings on the degree of collegiality among administrators were decidedly more pessimistic than during the first year of the program.

Scrutiny of the data in the Table reveals that generally however, there was a slight attenuation in attitudes over the course of the second year. Nevertheless in comparison to the previous year, attitudes tended to shift more negatively in several areas. Administrators tended to persist in their critical evaluations of the practicality of the knowledge acquired, the adequacy of follow-up support and the strength of the university partners. Satisfaction was noted in only two areas; co-ordination of professional development activities and the ease of implementing acquired knowledge. In both instances administrators were more favorable in their evaluations during the second year, than at the end of the first year. Opinions on whether or not leadership skills had improved as a consequence of the professional development experiences associated with the Institute remained tentative. During the mid-point of the second year administrators were extremely skeptical about the positive impact of the Institute, however by the end of the second year their skepticism abated and was consistent with the results from the first year which

indicated that roughly half of the administrators in the study felt that their leadership skills were favorably impacted by the program.

A persistent theme in the comments provided by administrators centered on the disconnection between the activities in their cohorts and their needs as urban school leaders. The following quotes are illustrative of administrators prevailing sense of frustration on this issue:

> The PLI Program has merit but we have a long way to go on making connections with our individual schools:
>
> I strongly suggest that all agendas of PLI meetings reflect the needs of the administrators. We should have input into the agenda.
>
> We have met about three times. The discussions were basically the same "What do we need". I've expressed my needs but have received no feedback.

Feelings of dissatisfaction were more pronounced in some of the cohort groupings and the percentage of administrators agreeing or who were uncertain that their leadership effectiveness had improved as a consequence of their involvement with the Institute either declined as in the case of agreement or increased as in feelings of uncertainty. For example, at the end of the second year over 50% of the administrators belonging to the cohort led by two of the universities whose focus was on moral leadership were unsure as to what leadership benefits they derived from their participation in cohort activities. Similarly, 48% of the cohort members belonging to the cohort focusing on administrative issues disagreed that their leadership effectiveness had been favorably impacted.

What were the underlying factors influencing these feelings? It was clear from the responses that these factors were specific to individual cohorts and reflect some of the problems which they each individually experienced. For the cohort influenced by moral/ethical formulations the most strident criticism expressed was its idealistic and overtly theoretical focus.

> PLI provide what I think is valuable information for ideal situations. To some very small extent the information they provide can be used in our environment. However, I would rather have someone who has worked in an urban setting such as ours and has realized a degree of success in improving test scores, teacher accountability, parental involvement, truancy, tardiness, student and parent drug abuse. ..... This way I believe the guidance given would be more realistic than idealistic.

In addition, because the leadership of this cohort saw its role as providing intellectual leadership, administrators tended to feel that university personnel were arrogant and devalued their experiences and beliefs. Administrators associated with other cohorts expressed concerns about such issues as, the lack of focus and direction, and the tangential relationship of cohort activities to school needs. On the other hand, the instructional leadership cohort maintained its relatively favorable standing in the eyes of the administrators. Reasons for this cohort's high ratings are captured by the following quotes:

> " ..... worked right along with the administrators. They were there to assist when needed."
>
> " Far more hands on practical information".
>
> " This year was more practical and professional".
>
> "Topics were relevant to my needs as an administrator".

Administrators' Valued Needs

If administrators feel that their needs were not being adequately addressed by most of the universities, how exactly were they casting these needs, and what in their opinion was the most appropriate development forum for meeting them. Administrators expressed needs fell within one of the four categories: 1) relational issues 2) instructional supervision 3) meeting

situational exigencies and 4) basic administrative/ management function. With respect to the first category, relational issues many administrators articulated concerns with developing competencies that would assist them in their relationship with staff, students, parents and the wider community. The overtones of the comments suggest that several of the assumptions of the moral/ethical leadership model were at the core of their feelings. For example, administrators spoke about the need to be able to communicate their vision to staff, to develop their role as change agents and to engage in discourses around school improvement and participatory decision making. Further, shoring up their competencies in resolving organizational conflicts, and effectively managing disputes surfaced as valued aspects of their professional development. Finally, developing leadership abilities that would assist in motivating marginal, disaffected and unmotivated faculty were identified as an area that administrators desired to be addressed by future professional development programs .

Under the category instructional supervision the most frequently expressed needs were staff development, test data analysis and strategies for effective teacher evaluation and conferencing. Administrators yearned for "more in-depth study of evaluation strategies and meaningful feedback to teachers". They also wanted to become more conversant with the current knowledge base on learning styles and portfolio assessment.

Urban administrators operate in contexts characterized by unpredictable changes and unexpected demands. Being able to meet these situational exigencies was considered to be important to the administrators in the study. During this study administrators faced two unanticipated challenges. First, they were required to undertake a new budgetary process which required a fair degree of computer literacy. Second, the state initiated new requirements for school based plans, the format of which was unfamiliar to administrators. Many wished that their cohort experiences could have helped them more effectively with these processes. With

regard to routine administrative/managerial needs administrators desired to have more information on school law, time management, union relationships, student discipline and stress management.

Administrators held a wide range of opinions on how they would like to see their professional development opportunities structured. Most would like to see their professional development not occur during the regular school day, with an agenda developed well in advance with their input and with teachers and assistant superintendents attending some of the sessions. Further they would like their professional development to be more closely tied to career stages with veteran and new administrators being exposed to qualitatively different experiences. In fact, it is worth pointing out that administrators with the lowest level of participation in the Institute tended to be veterans who did not feel that the Institute had much to offer them. Administrators also desired to have professional development experiences that were more directly related to their roles as urban leaders, marked by continuity in topics rather than one-shot approaches, and led by presenters/facilitators who were knowledgeable on urban issues and could provide practical solutions. In addition, several administrators articulated the need for visits to successful schools both urban and non-urban, for facilitators to visit their schools more frequently and engage in professional development activities on site, and for administrators to jointly collaborate on projects. Finally, consistent follow-up support was viewed as important component of any professional development program they would like to participate in. Administrators were asked what in their opinion constitutes a successful professional development experience. The following comments are illustrative of the responses:

"It met the problems that we see every day in the building."

"I became more at ease in dealing with unpleasant situations and confrontations"

"My knowledge base on current educational trends/ research continues to expand and grow".

"student success improves".

"I make a difference in the life of a teacher or a child".

DISCUSSION

This study was concerned with raising and answering three questions considered to be germane to the professional development of incumbent school-based administrators in urban systems undergoing transformation. These questions are one, how do administrators define and cast their needs; two, how effective are public school/university collaborations in meeting these needs and three, how may the results from this study be canalized with previous findings to advance our understanding of leadership development.

With respect to the first question, the study found that urban administrators working in complex systems have a wide variety of needs which they seek to have met through professional development opportunities. These needs exist on multiple levels and are associated with routinized functions, coping with situational exigencies, securing the instructional agenda and developing transformative capacity abilities both within themselves and in their school cultures. In an environment pressured by changes emanating from the wider society as well as shifts in policy directions from state boards of education as well as central office directives, the urban administrator is forced to add to his or her repertoire of competencies skills and attributes that will assist in meeting the demands of an increasingly complex and non-linear educational system.

It is clear that educational administration programs at the college level cannot adequately prepare administrators for such complex roles, and therefore the need for continuous professional development experiences become paramount. This study found that similar to

what has been noted in teacher development programs, the lack of a coherent focus and a clear theoretical base to the professional development activities of the Institute created several problems which were further compounded by the competing notions of leadership advanced by the eight universities.

We also found that the prescriptive and practical implications flowing from these notions for organizing the process of professional development was not sufficiently thought out prior to the implementation of the program. As a consequence many administrators were critical of the overtly theoretical and idealistic slant of the professional development experiences. In spite of the fact that the culture of a school setting predisposes it to be highly practical, this does not necessarily imply an anti-theoretical bias. The comments from administrators on their perceived needs reveal that administrators in the district wanted help in learning how to actualize many of the concepts inherent in the moral and ethical theories of leadership as well as the other theoretical traditions in the field. However, partially as a consequence of the failure on the part of the school district and universities to reframe or lodge these concepts within the urban context, administrators found it quite difficult to translate the knowledge gained from the Institute into their schools.

Legitimizing the voices of administrators in developing the content and process of their professional development experiences cannot be overemphasized. The professional development literature is replete with findings highly suggestive of the fact that successful professional development programs are ones that make participants complicit in their formation. The results from the present study indicate that the cohort perceived to be most effective was the one which took cognizance of the urban context and which attempted to not only incorporate the needs of participants but which also gave legitimacy to their ideas and belief systems. There is no doubt that urban leaders value the potential contributions which

institutions of higher education can make to their transformation as borne out by the fact that administrators at the beginning of this project felt that the universities had much to offer. However, bridging the gap between theory and praxis still remains problematic, particularly in instances where the empirical referents for knotty theoretical concepts have not been fully fleshed out.

We undertook this study on the premise that empirically grounded data is needed to further our understanding on how to develop in incumbent leaders those attributes which we assume from a theoretical perspective are desirable for successful transformation of our urban school systems. The results from our investigation buttress several of the emergent findings on both teacher and administrator development with respect to successful professional development programs. These results converge on the notions of praxis and reflection, flexibility in accommodating the needs of participants, a clear theoretical and coherent focus, opportunities for collaboration, integrated within the culture of the school and inextricably linked to the real needs of participants, ongoing opportunities for feedback, follow-up support and giving a voice to participants.

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TABLE 1

Major Theoretical Underpinnings of University Collaborators

Philosophical Leanings	Number of Universities
Moral/Ethical	3
Instructional Leadership	1
Problem-Based Learning	1
Contingency Theory	1
Scientific Management	1
Eclectic	1

TABLE 2
Relationship Between Philosophical Orientation and Assumptions about Changing Leadership Practices

	Assumptions about Change					
Philosophical Leanings	Engaging Belief Systems	Legitimizing Beliefs and Practices	Building Trust	Engaging Participants at level of competency	Participants Must be willing to change	Not clearly articulated
Moral/ethical tenets	2		1		1	
Instructional Leader		1		1		
Problem-Based Learning						1
Contingency Theory					1	
Scientific /Management			1			
Eclectic						1

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TABLE 3

Administrators' Evaluation of their Professional Development Experiences (Percent Agreeing)

Area	Strongly Agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Need for greater relevancy	29.3%	26.8%	3.7%	25.6%	7.3%
Knowledge acquired is practical and useful	15.9%	51.2%	27.0%	6.1%	1.2%
Knowledge acquired is easy to implement	4.9%	40.2%	28.9%	18.3%	3.7%
Collegiality exists among cohort members	34.1%	45.1%	8.5%	1.2%	1.2%
Universities have much to offer	23.2%	48.8%	8.4%	4.4%	1.2%
Co-ordination needed	45.1%	30.5%	7.3%	6.1%	1.2%
Follow-up support is adequate	23.2%	46.3%	28.0%	18.3%	3.7%
Mentoring support is valuable	22.0%	32.4%	14.5%	11.0%	3.7%
Effectiveness as a leader has improved	11.0%	39.0%	20.7%	14.6%	2.4%

Note: N=80

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TABLE 4
RIDIT VALUES FOR MID-YEAR AND END OF SECOND YEAR SURVEYS

Area	Moral/Ethic. Leadership	Instructional Leadership	Contingency Theory	Problem-Based Learning	Scientific Management	Eclectic
Need for greater relevancy	3.45 (1.39)	2.64 (1.60)	3.56 (1.51)	3.75 (1.51)	3.87 (1.28)	3.86 (1.07)
Knowledge acquired is practical and useful	3.64 (.89)	4.33 (.62)	3.78 (.44)	3.67 (.44)	3.38 (.52)	4.14 (1.46)
Knowledge is easy to implement	3.12 (1.05)	3.47 (1.06)	3.33 (.71)	3.44 (1.01)	3.25 (1.01)	3.29 (1.25)
Adequate Follow-up Support	3.77 (.93)	4.07 (.96)	4.00 (.87)	3.56 (1.24)	3.83 (1.24)	3.43 (1.51)
Coord. needed	4.30 (.90)	3.64 (1.15)	4.40 (.01)	4.71 (.76)	4.25 (.71)	4.29 (1.25)
Collegiality exists between cohort members	4.00 (.93)	4.54 (.52)	4.56 (.53)	4.14 (.69)	4.00 (.53)	4.43 (.53)
Universities have much to offer	4.09 (.42)	4.42 (.67)	4.00 (1.00)	3.86 (1.07)	3.87 (.83)	3.86 (1.35)
Mentoring support is valuable	3.8 (.82)	4.07 (1.14)	3.78 (.83)	3.43 (1.13)	3.00 (1.41)	3.43 (1.51)
Effectiveness as leader has improved	3.18 (.98)	4.08 (1.04)	3.67 (1.22)	3.29 (1.11)	3.25 (.46)	3.86 (.92)

Note: Number in parenthesis represents standard deviation

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TABLE 5
RIDIT VALUES FOR MID-YEAR AND END OF SECOND YEAR SURVEYS

Area	Mid-Year	End of Year
Need for greater relevance	.50	.48
Knowledge acquired is practical and useful	.58*	.68*
Knowledge acquired is easy to implement	.56	.39*
Collegiality exists between college members	.48	.55*
Universities have much to offer	.67*	.61*
Coor. Needed	.35*	.34*
Follow-up support is adequate	.71*	.59*
Mentoring support is valuable	.69*	.58*
Effectiveness as a leader has improved	.64*	.55

Note: N for end of first year=80, mid-year surveys=108, end of second year survey=72.

* Z values statistically significant based on the formula (r-.50/se r)

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